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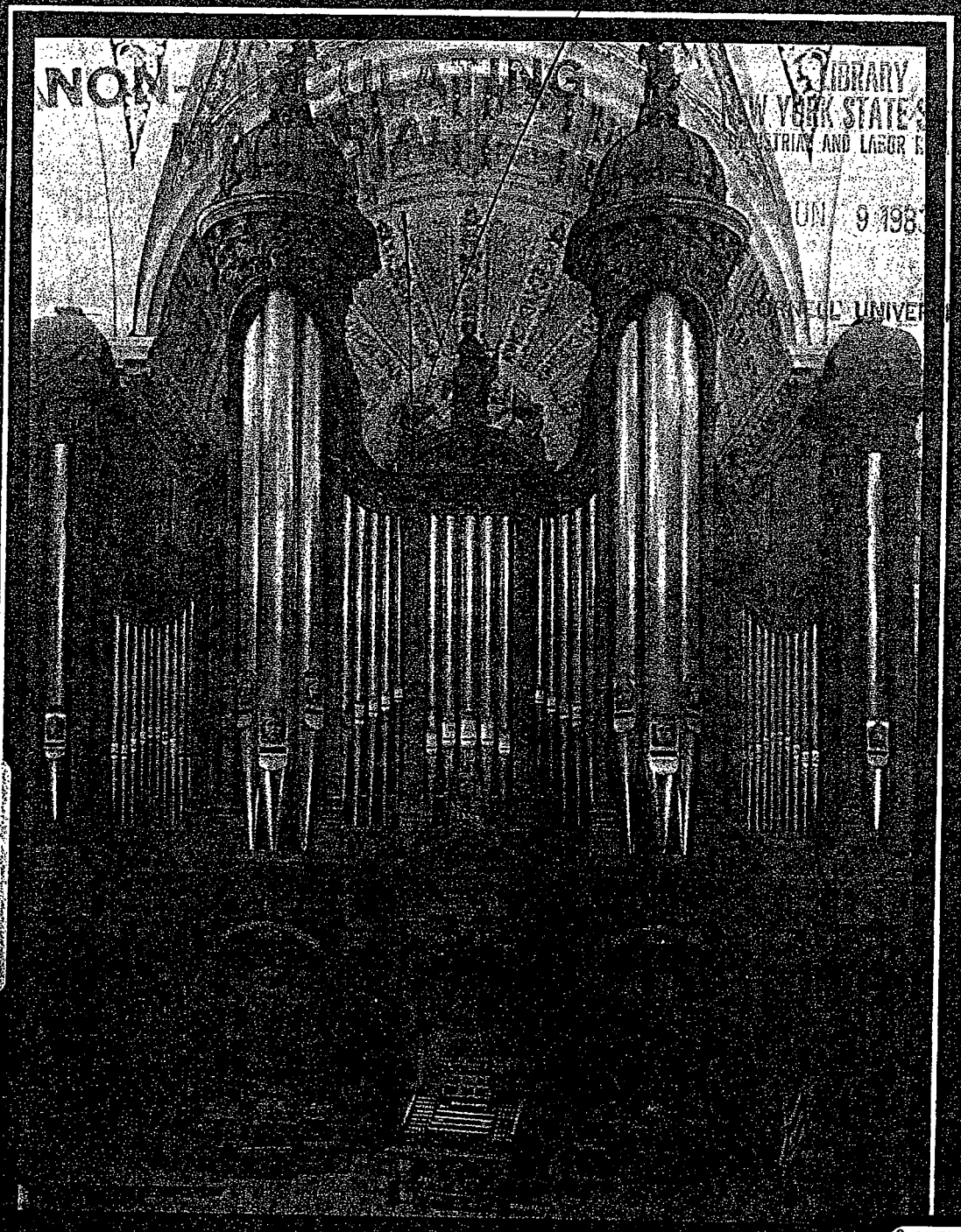
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JOURNAL

JUNE 1983



Boston Painters Restore Methuen Memorial Music Hall

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Painters and Allied Trades JOURNAL

On The Cover

IBPAT Craftsmen from Local 35 recently renovated the "Great Organ" in Methuen, Mass. Story, page 10.

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Any member or subordinate body publishing programs, souvenirs or other documents of any description must not designate them as "The Official Journal of International Brotherhood of Painters and Allied Trades Journal," either upon the publication itself or their advertising contract forms or stationery.

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S. FRANK RAFTERY
General President
1750 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

ROBERT J. PETERSDORF
General Secretary-Treasurer
1750 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

General Vice Presidents

BERNARD SNIEGOWSKI
1st District
1443 Westchester Boulevard
Westchester, Ill. 60153

A. L. MONROE, 2nd District
7909 Bayberry Drive
Alexandria, Va. 22306

JAMES WOLFORD, 3rd District
100 Devon Lane
Williamsville, N.Y. 14221

JACK T. COX, 4th District
2212 DuPont Drive
Irvine, Calif. 92715

GUY LEBER, 5th District
1930 Bishop Lane
Louisville, Ky. 40218

JAMES B. COX, 6th District
8800 Blue Ridge Ext. No. 10
Kansas City, Mo. 64138

WILLIAM A. DUVAL, 7th District
1750 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Rocky Mountain News Covers Painters' Health Problems

Painters' health disorders caused by toxics in paint products received widespread publicity recently in the Sunday edition of the *Rocky Mountain News*. The leading newspaper in the Rocky Mountain region, the *News*' Sunday circulation is 350,000. The article prompted TV-news reports by all major Denver stations.

This is the greatest publicity given to painters' neurological disorders since a *New York Times* Sunday feature sparked national media coverage of the problem in 1981.

The general public traditionally thinks of painting as a comfortable, risk-free occupation. This misconception is finally being attacked with informative reports such as those in the *News* and the *Times*. Publicity like this is waking people up to the truth—that hundreds of toxic chemicals used in the painting industry pose one of the most serious health threats among all occupations.

General President S. Frank Raftery told the *News* that toxic chemicals in paints are "a major health threat to painters that rivals or exceeds the better known health threats to asbestos workers."

The *Rocky Mountain News* article focuses on IBPAT Member David Friel's personal struggle with "toxic brain syndrome." The disease developed after 16 years' spray painting with oil, enamel, epoxies and other solvent-containing products. Some studies may indicate that up to 30 percent of professional painters could be affected to some degree by toxic brain syndrome. The disease is characterized by depression, anxiety, loss of memory, slowed speech, and other symptoms.

Brother Friel's wife Linda told the *News* that the family first noticed a change in his behavior in 1976. "He'd come home from work and just start hollering at me and the children for no reason. It was so unlike him. But we didn't know what was wrong then." Friel's condition deteriorated for the next two years. His memory began to fade and he suffered from unexplained depression. Linda Friel told the *News*, "He'd come home from work, sit on the couch and just start crying. We'd ask him what was the matter but he wouldn't answer. He just kept crying and crying." Aside from these disorders, Friel also suffered from bloody rashes on his feet, legs and torso. "His wife would have to follow him as he walked across the kitchen floor in his stocking feet, cleaning up the bloody footprints Friel left behind," said the *News*.

Brother Friel didn't stop painting until 1979 when a serious near-accident finally made him realize there really was something wrong with him. "That's the way people who have this disease react," Friel said. "They think everybody else is screwed up and not them." Linda Friel believes it is vitally important for painters' spouses to be aware and alert for signs of health problems their mates may be experiencing.

Brother Friel is aware now of what toxics in the paints he worked with were doing to him. As he told the *News*:

> "It's scary for something like that to happen to you. It's like me walking up to you and telling you that something you've been doing for 10 or 20 years is bad for you. You bought a house, raised a family and provided for them. Then one day somebody walks up to you, taps you on the shoulder and tells you that you've got to quit and go mow lawns or something."

David Friel still lives with the symptoms of toxic brain syndrome today and doctors say he probably will for the rest of his life, according to the *News* article. "I guess the worst thing is that I can't depend on myself anymore. I have a big hang-up about whether I'm right or wrong when I make decisions. I just can't remember how to do things I used to do all the time," Friel said. A week before the *News* article was published, memory problems and the recurring numbness in Friel's hands forced his current employer to put him in a simpler and lower paying job in the company's packaging department. Friel's reduced earning capacity has placed tremendous financial strain on the family — making an already tragic situation worse.



David Friel

Many painters tend to lose more symptoms of toxic brain syndrome. IBPAT/OSH Project Director Marilyn Larson told the *News* that painters have difficulty finding doctors who know enough about the disease to diagnose the symptoms correctly. "The symptoms are often mistaken for signs of psychological illness," she told the *News*. "The whole area of occupational health is so new that many doctors just don't know what to look for.

IBPAT has dedicated the "Decade of Job Safety and Health" to warning its members of the health hazards of their trades and teaching them how to protect themselves from the

Rocky Mountain News
Weather Warmer
Page 1
124th year, No. 339 Denver, Colo. Sunday March 27, 1983

hazards. But, Larson told the *News* that IBPAT's training efforts are often stymied because of the failure by manufacturers to properly label their products." The *News* article points out that labels on most paint containers do not tell much about their contents, even though some contain substances so toxic that painters are exposed above the permissible levels almost as soon as they open the can.

Although OSHA is considering requiring labels to list hazardous ingredients, these regulations would cover only products used in manufacturing facilities—not those used in the construction trades. IBPAT Health and Safety Department Director Rod Wolford said this is due to a mistaken belief among regulators that many standards which protect workers in general industry are not feasible in construction and maintenance. But, Wolford said, paint and allied product labels should list early symptoms of overexposure and emergency treatment. It is also possible to determine in advance the cubic feet of fresh air needed each hour to protect painters from toxic exposures. This "ventilation requirement" could also appear on paint and allied product labels. Portable ventilation systems and air-fed hoods are effective in protecting workers from overexposure, Wolford told the *News*, but many contractors don't provide these safeguards even though they are responsible for the safety of their employees.

"Like many painters, contractors often are unaware or unconcerned about the dangers," Wolford said. "But no matter how negligent an employer might be, he is covered by his worker's compensation insurance." On the other hand, many painters get caught in the "compensation trap" as they attempt to prove their illnesses were caused by their jobs. IBPAT/OSH Project Director Larson told the *News* that "over 96 percent of such claims are denied." David Friel is one of few painters who has sued product manufacturers. He is asking $22 million in damages from the paint companies who produced the products he claims caused his toxic brain syndrome.

"I don't know if we'll get any money from the suit or not," Friel told the *News*. "But the one thing I hope that comes out of all this is that other painters will realize this can happen and is happening to them. I know some right now who have it, but they refuse to believe it. They've got to do something before it's too late."

IBPAT and 'No Greater Love'

IBPAT's Director of Jurisdiction James Shay represented IBPAT and labor at a recent No Greater Love dedication service for POWs and MIAs. No Greater Love, a group founded to aid the families of U.S. servicemen taken prisoner or missing in Southeast Asia, dedicated an amelanchier tree at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, as a "living memorial" to all American POWs and MIAs.

Other guests include Veterans Administration Chief Harry Walters, two members of No Greater Love's National Advisory Council, Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kans.) and Rep. Lindy Boggs (D-La.), and former POWs and their families, and families of men still missing in Southeast Asia. Broadcast news commentator Howard K. Smith was master of ceremonies.

No Greater Love's Chairman of the Board Carmella LaSpada noted that "the amelanchier tree will be a living memorial to America's POWs and to all those who keep their dreams alive."

Children of fathers missing in Southeast Asia concluded the ceremony by planting forget-me-nots at the base of the tree.

Shown in picture below, left to right, former Vietnam POW Col. John Fer, USAF; IBPAT Director of Jurisdiction James Shay and his wife, Lorraine; and No Greater Love Chairman of the Board Carmella LaSpada.



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